

## All Age/BCP, 9<sup>th</sup> September 2018: Generosity 2 – Generous Living

Wonder if, when you heard that passage from Timothy, you put yourself in that group or not – those who are *'rich in this world'*. Many of us may not feel rich – depends who you compare yourself with:

- 2 facts – the world's richest 10% currently have 85% of the wealth (the other 90% therefore have 15%).
- Britain ranks 11<sup>th</sup> of 168 countries for average adult wealth. So if the world were 100 people, ranked 1=wealthiest and 100=poorest, the average Brit would be 7<sup>th</sup>, comfortably in the top 10% globally

So most of us probably count for this: what's the advice for us?

**Question of trust** – what do you hope in? – contrasts money and God – READ v17. E.g. of 50 rich sports stars – David James now selling off his England caps.

Note that *God provides for our enjoyment* – often contrast worldly luxury with drab, grey, piety – but not how Paul sees it. God made the world for us to enjoy, and God can easily give us a rich, full life. The message of the bible is that money lies because it promises what it can't deliver – EXPAND

**Question of time** – more than just where we put our hope, there's a practical outcome – to be rich in good deeds – love that phrase. More than one type of wealth – yes, there's financial generosity which St Paul refers to here but which we'll think about more later in the series. But today let's focus on generous living – *'rich in good deeds'*.

Wonder who your heroes are? One of mine is William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army. If you want to know what being rich on good deeds looks like, here's an account of his funeral:

*'William Booth, died, aged 83, on August 20th, 1912. 'The General,' the Salvation Army announced, 'has laid down his sword.' His body lay in state for three days at the Congress Hall in Clapton while 150,000 people filed past. Some 35,000 attended the memorial service for him at Olympia.*

*A week later, on 29<sup>th</sup> August, 5,000 Salvationists in uniform marched through the City from the Army's headquarters in Queen Victoria Street with 40 Army*

*bands playing the 'Dead March' from Handel's Saul. 2 million people lined the route to pay their respects (double the 1 million which lined the streets for Lady Diana's procession), as the coffin was taken to the Abney Park Cemetery in Stoke Newington, where the General was buried beside his wife Catherine, the Army's co-founder.*

*Among this vast crowd were (as one commentator said) 'thieves, tramps, harlots, the lost and outcast to whom Booth had given his heart'. Also there – sitting unnoticed by many at the rear of the hall – was Queen Mary, wife of King George V. This was as clear a message as any that the man who had begun his work among the outcasts of society had touched the hearts – and maybe stirred the consciences – of even the most privileged people.'*

That's what a lifetime of being good in deeds looks like. William Booth was not a wealthy man, but his riches are displayed in the lives of tens of thousands of changed lives.

We might not operate on that scale, but we have the same call to a generous lifestyle. What will that look like for us? Who can we be rich in good deeds to? Who can we share with? Who can we give our time to?

*Rare word for 'command' – 6x (2x Jesus and 2x Paul) – not usual word, means an urgent plea or warning. For St Paul, living generously is a big deal. Breaking grip of money in our lives is not just a good idea but a vital key to life. God promises to provide all we need for our enjoyment – so let's take his advice and resolve to be 'rich in good deeds' today.*

CONVERSATION QUESTION FOR ALL AGE: How can you be 'rich in good deeds' this week or this month?